



Pastor Chris Marien
Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Sunday July 26, 2020

Reflection

We are celebrating our first baptism today since the beginning of the pandemic. I am thrilled. At Ascension, baptisms are pretty commonplace – though not one baptism is a common experience. Today at the outside 10:30 service we will celebrate the baptism of Connor Joseph Cali. And, believe me, it is a big deal. Before the pandemic, they were lining up and then when the pandemic forced us to close, these baptisms starting backing up. And then we scheduled and rescheduled and finally, today, here we are. And the beauty of this day is about celebrating God’s promise for Connor – a promise offered to each of us in our baptism. A promise of presence, a promise of forgiveness, a promise of love, a promise of eternal life. Yes, I am thrilled to celebrate Connor’s baptism today. For Connor becomes one more signpost on this journey of faith that God is with us – that God promises to always be with us. From the reading in Matthew today

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.” He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.” “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad.

Here, in our Savior’s own words, Jesus shares with us the promise and presence of the Kingdom of God. The smallest of seeds becomes a tree so that others may benefit from its shade. A bit of yeast brings the fullness of life to dough. A treasure so precious that once found is hidden until the finder can purchase the entire field. A perfect pearl so rare and so precious that the merchant sells all that he had in order to buy it. And a net cast into the sea catches more than was thought possible. For so long I have lived with these stories as reminders that my faith should grow like the mustard seed. That my life should help others to rise like the yeast. That my faith in Jesus is the treasure so rare hidden in the field. That our trust in God is like the perfect pearl – where we would let go of everything else to hold onto that faith. That the net – so full of fish should be the product of my faithfulness and living out of that faith for others to see so that they might come to know the love of Jesus. And perhaps what I have learned and been taught has been right all along. Yet today Connor reminds me of a different interpretation. This day as Connor comes to the waters of baptism, I am reminded that Connor is sheltered in God’s protection. I am reminded that Connor is the life uplifted by the presence of God – that Connor is the treasure hidden – so valued by God that God leaves all else behind to save that treasure. You get the idea. And not just Connor this day – but all of us each day – so treasured, so protected, so loved by our God that all else pales when God finds us, chases after us, stands by our side, lifts us up, loves us above all else. This is the promise I remind you of today. This is the promise Connor will carry forever – from this day forward as he is marked with the cross of Christ forever. Thanks be to God! Amen.